

Rethinking Exchange and Empires: Senkaku/Diaoyu and Cold War Strategies: Another Battle for Okinawa?

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In mid-2012, Chinese news media started questioning Japanese sovereignty over the Ryūkyū Islands (Okinawa prefecture). One of the first to publicly announce Chinese claims concerning the Ryūkyūs was Major General Jin Yīnan 金一南, head of the strategy research institute at the PLA National Defense University in Beijing.¹ Since then, newspapers in the PRC and Hong Kong have reiterated such claims, based on the historical fact that the kingdom of Ryūkyū was a Chinese tribute state before it was incorporated into Japan in 1872.²

This media campaign is apparently backed by the Chinese government and the CPC. On May 9, 2013, a PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman rejected Japanese protests against the questioning of Japanese sovereignty over the Ryūkyūs by stating

[...] that the matter has become prominent again due to Japan's provocative actions over the Diaoyu Islands issue and its infringement on China's territorial sovereignty.³

Furthermore, the CPC-affiliated People's Daily made it clear, on May 11, that

[...] if Japan ultimately chooses antagonism with China, Beijing should consider changing its current stance and revisit the Ryukyu issue as an unsolved historical problem.⁴

By “playing the Ryukyu card”, China seems to be ready to resort to two possible tactics: either claim the Ryūkyūs for herself or support the

1 Hille and Dickie 23.07.2012.

2 What is not so often mentioned in Chinese media is that the kingdom was concurrently also a tribute state of Japan.

3 “China does not accept Japanese protest over Okinawa article”, *People's Daily Online*, english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/8238929.html, last access: 2013-05-14.

4 “Ryukyu issue offers leverage to China”, *People's Daily Online*, 2013-05-11, english.people.com.cn/90883/8240741.html, last access: 2013-05-14.

Ryūkyū independence movement that has existed since 1945. Either move is meant to weaken the Japanese position in the ongoing Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute.

However, this strategy could easily backfire. On December 27, the Japanese news agency Jiji Press reported the existence of a document entitled “Draft platform on issues and arguments in the parts concerning territories in the peace with Japan” and produced by the Diplomatic Division of the People’s Republic of China on May 15, 1950, in which the Senkaku Islands are explicitly referred to with their Japanese, not with their Chinese name,⁵ and which concludes that these rocks belonged to the Ryūkyū Islands. It also stated that

[...] it should be studied whether the Senkaku Islands should be incorporated into Taiwan.⁶

Jiji Press found this document in the online database of archives of the PRC Foreign Ministry. Public access to this database has since been restricted due to “upgrading its computer systems for technical reasons”.⁷ Regarding the validity of the document itself, the Chinese government does not deny the existence of the source as such but maintains that

[...] it is just an unsigned draft document for reference, and cannot represent the official opinion of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁸

In fact, it did not come as a surprise that such a document could be found. As Hara Kimie has already stated, PRC allegations that the Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands are not part of the Ryūkyū Islands, but of Taiwan, do not predate December 1971.⁹ As for the whole of the Ryūkyū Islands, Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai on the symbolic date of August 15, 1951, explicitly declared that

5 A scan of this passage was published by Jiji Press: www.jiji.com/jc/zc?g=pol&k=201212/2012122700471&p=0121227at23&rel=pv, last access: 2013-05-14.

6 “Chūgoku Gaikō Bunsho ni ‘Senkaku shotō’ = Nihonmei meiji, ‘Ryūkyū no ichibu’ to ninshiki: hajimete hakken” 中国外交文書に「尖閣諸島」=日本名明記、「琉球の一部」と認識—初めて発見, www.jiji.com/jc/zc?k=201212/2012122700471, last access: 2013-05-14. See also “As far back as 1950, China referred to Senkakus as part of Ryukyus”, *The Asahi Shimbun*, 2012-12-12, online edition: ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201212280079, last access: 2013-05-14.

7 Torres 01.02.2013.

8 “US, Japan cannot change history by confusing the public”, *People’s Daily Online*, 2013-01-08, english.people.com.cn/90777/8083511.html, last access: 2013-05-14.

9 Hara 2006, 179.

[...] these islands have never by any international agreement separated from Japan.¹⁰

The PRC took this position, which ran against the claims made earlier by the ROC (Taiwan), because she opposed U.S. trusteeship of these islands. The PRC position can be understood as a Cold War strategy meant to meddle in the preparation of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952, whose Art. 3 gave the U.S.

[...] the right to exercise all and any powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of these islands, including their territorial waters.

One of the big issues of the San Francisco Peace Treaty was the implementation of Art. 8 of the Potsdam Declaration to limit Japanese sovereignty to

[...] to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we (i.e., the Allies) determine.

The Ryūkyū Islands were not mentioned in this declaration, so that their adherence to Japan was at the disposal of the Allies. From 1942 on, ROC representatives including Chiang Kai-shek had demanded that the Ryūkyūs be handed over to China.¹¹ Seen from this angle, it did obviously not matter whether the Senkaku/Diaoyu belonged to Taiwan or Okinawa: If Okinawa was given to Taiwan, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands would come to Taiwan by implication. As late as May 1951, the U.S. and Great Britain, during their preparatory meetings for the San Francisco Peace Conference, still pondered the idea of having Japan renounce these and many other islands. When suddenly confronted with the American reasoning to leave “residual sovereignty” over these territories to Japan, the British suspected that the U.S. were intendedly “a little vague” on this issue.¹² In the end, for almost twenty years, the future of the Ryūkyū Islands — U.N. trusteeship, return to Japan, independence, or else — was left open. Thus, there was no urgent need for the PRC to change her position on the Senkaku/Diaoyu question.

This changed after the U.S. decided to return Okinawa to Japan in 1972. For both Chinas, Okinawa was now definitely lost. If any claims concern-

10 Hara 2006, 176.

11 Hara 2006, 161.

12 Hara 2006, 173.

ing the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands were to be upheld, they must be separated from the Okinawan question. Hence, in June 1971, the ROC started claiming that these islands belonged to Taiwan; the PRC seconded in December 1971.¹³ The territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands finally emerged.

Until then, the U.S. had treated the Senkaku Islands as part of Okinawa prefecture. A memorandum prepared by the U.S. Defense ministry for the Foreign Ministry in March, 1971, quotes as evidence 1944 U.S. military maps and the U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryūkyūs' Civil Administration Proclamation No. 27 of 1953.¹⁴ Thereafter, however, the U.S. government proclaimed a policy of neutrality towards the antagonistic claims – while, on the other hand, handing over administration of the islands to the Japanese and confirming that the Senkaku Islands are covered in the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and thus enjoy U.S. protection in the case of military aggression against Japan; an attitude that Linus Hagström rightly calls an “inconsistency”.¹⁵

But this inconsistency may have been quite purposeful: Hara Kimie claims that by deliberately constructing “wedges” between Japan and her neighbors (also including the Takeshima/Dokdo, and the Kurile Islands questions), the U.S. succeeded in linking their Japanese allies firmly to their American friends.

As for Senkaku/Diaoyu, a territorial dispute between Japan and China, especially over islands near Okinawa, would make the US military presence in Okinawa more acceptable to Japan.¹⁶

In short,

[...] the problems of both Okinawa and Senkaku are in their origin deeply related to US policy toward Asia, especially China.¹⁷

The document published in the following reflects and explains the position of the U.S. government as it has been maintained since the 1970s without evident changes. The current crisis that broke out in September

13 Hara 2006, 179.

14 Hara 2006, 179.

15 Hagström 2012, 286.

16 Hara 2006, 181.

17 Hara 2006, 183.

2010 has so far only served to underline this. On October 30, 2010, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton confirmed that

[...] we have made it very clear that the islands are part of our mutual treaty obligations, and the obligation to defend Japan.¹⁸

This reaffirmation of U.S.-Japanese solidarity is one of the reasons why, for the time being, the current Senkaku/Diaoyu *cum* Okinawa crisis has, in Linus Hagström's interpretation, produced "quite significant benefits for Japan".¹⁹ Among others, China's image of bullying her neighbors and threatening their territorial integrity was internationally reinforced. It is hard to imagine that outside of China anyone will accept Chinese claims to Okinawa, or that Japan will change her attitude because of them. On the contrary, conservative and right-wing politicians in Japan who interpret this as the literal fulfillment of their earlier warnings against Chinese expansionism can now push forward their plans to revise the constitution of 1946 with the goal of transforming the Japanese Self Defense Forces into a full-fledged Defense Army (*kokubōgun* 国防軍). The new conservative government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo 安倍晋三 aims at further

[...] strengthening ties with Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and other nations that share concerns about Beijing.²⁰

Moreover, a Japan-Taiwan agreement on the joint management of fishing in waters near the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands that had been negotiated since 1996 was finally signed on April 10 and went into effect on May 10, 2013. It was not meant to solve the ongoing territorial dispute, but "both governments agreed to 'set aside the dispute'".²¹ There is little doubt that the conclusion of this agreement was accelerated by the recent events.

18 "Clinton urges Japan and China to return to talks over disputed islands", *CNN*, edition. cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/10/30/vietnam.clinton.visit/index.html, last access: 2013-05-14.

19 Hagström 2012, 296.

20 Harlan 2013-02-26.

21 Shih 11.04.2013. The agreement extends the area of operation of Taiwanese fishing boats into the designated area, with lies within Japan's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone. While the agreement was internationally welcomed as a step of deescalation, fishermen in Okinawa who apparently had not been consulted before it was concluded have been reported to oppose it because they fear economical disadvantages. See "Japan-Taiwan fishing pact takes effect, but rough waters lie ahead", *The Asahi Shimbun*, online edition: ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201305110065, last access: 2013-05-14.

Although obviously favoring the Japanese side, the standing American position does not, however, lead the way to a lasting solution of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai question itself. It was never meant to. The U.S. is still holding the key to the problem.

A thorough understanding of the American position is therefore absolutely necessary. On February 2, 2009, WikiLeaks published a document entitled “Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands Dispute: The U.S. Legal Relationship and Obligations” that presents a concise summary of this position and its historical evolution.²² It was written by Larry A. Niksch from the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress and released on September 30, 1996. “Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress”, this document, as all materials supplied to the Congress, was considered, in the words of the homepage of the service, “authoritative, confidential, objective and non-partisan”.²³ It is hard to estimate just how confidential this particular analysis was treated because about one month later, a document with the same title was published in The Center for Strategic and International Studies’ PacNet Newsletter no. 45 (Nov. 8, 1996), which was subsequently quoted in several publications. A CNN online article even contains a weblink to the CSIS netsite with this document,²⁴ but the link is dead. As of today, neither the CSIS nor the Congressional Research Service offer public access to this document. Because of the insights offered in it, it seems justified to republish it, in the format, which it was given by WikiLeaks, as historical reference for the ongoing confrontation that the Japanese historian Wada Haruki cannot avoid calling “foolish”.²⁵

Introduction

In September 2012, a group of Japanese intellectuals prepared and circulated an appeal to the Japanese government that called for a peaceful resolution of the territorial disputes between Japan, China, Taiwan, and Korea. The appeal was also published on the Internet, together with Chi-

22 [Wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS:_Senkaku_\(Diaoyu\)_Islands_Dispute:_The_U.S._Legal_Relationship_and_Obligations,_September_30,_1996](http://Wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS:_Senkaku_(Diaoyu)_Islands_Dispute:_The_U.S._Legal_Relationship_and_Obligations,_September_30,_1996), last access: 2013-05-14.

23 www.loc.gov/crsinfo/, last access: 2013-05-14.

24 “Japanese coast guard wins standoff with protesters”, *CNN Interactive*, 1997-5-26, edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9705/26/islands.taiwan/, last access: 2013-05-14.

25 Wada 25.10.2010.

nese, Korean, and English translations.²⁶ By October 25, 1,966 citizens from Japan (among them, Nobel Prize laureate Ōe Kenzaburō and Motoshima Hitoshi 本島等, former mayor of Hiroshima, were arguable the most prominent) had signed, and the appeal was handed over to the Saitō Tsuyoshi, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary of the Japanese government. Among those who signed,. Following the Japanese example, similar declarations were prepared in Taiwan, China, and South Korea.

The appeal was launched by Okamoto Atsushi 岡本厚 (b. 1954), former editor of the monthly magazine “Sekai” and chairman of Iwanami Publishers 岩波書店, the leading Japanese intellectual publisher. Previously, Okamoto had taken part in movements against discrimination and for Japanese-Korean reconciliation. In 1980, he was among the founders of the Japanese International Volunteer Center (JVC), a non-governmental organization aiming at “rural development, emergency relief, peace exchange, and advocacy” and currently active in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, South Africa, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, North Korea, and Sudan.²⁷

While the Chinese, Taiwanese, and South Korean media warmly welcomed the appeal, it raised only little attention in Japan. A candlelight rally in front of the Diet members’ office building in Tokyo on October 18, 2012 was attended by only 40 citizens, among them “professors and lawyers,” as the press reported.²⁸ Predictably, the Japanese Right denounced the appeal as “anti-Japanese.”²⁹

Although the political impact of the appeal was fairly limited and the new right-wing Japanese government installed in December 2012 can obviously not be expected to adopt it for its foreign diplomacy, it reflects and documents the voice of concerned Japanese intellectuals in face of the yet unsolved territorial disputes threatening peace and stability in East Asia.

For the current edition, the Japanese original has been translated anew into English by Reinhard Zöllner.

26 peace3appeal.jimdo.com/

27 www.ngo-jvc.net/en/aboutjvc.html

28 “Ryōdo mondai, taiwa de kaiketsu wo: Nitchūkan, chishikijin ni sandō no wa” 領土問題、対話で解決を日中韓、知識人に賛同の輪 (Solve the territorial disputes by dialogue: A circle of support among intellectuals in Japan, China and South Korea), *Asahi Shinbun* 朝日新聞, 19.10.2010.

29 E.g., Kuroda 30.09.2012.

**Let us stop the vicious circle of the “territorial issues”!
– An appeal of Japanese citizens –**

September 28, 2012

1. A chain of issues have arisen about the Senkaku and Takeshima islands, intensifying tensions in the vicinity of Japan. When we remember that in 2009 a government led by the Democratic Party came into being that stressed the priority of East Asia and equality with the U.S., and that, following the Great Eastern Japan Disaster of March 3, 2011, the leaders of China and Korea, Wen Jiabao 温家宝³⁰ and Yi Myeongbak 李明博,³¹ driven by compassion and sympathy, both came to Japan and offered support to the evacuees, the current situation is truly regrettable and must be called sad. For Japan, South Korea and China are important friends and partners which together are building up peace and prosperity in our region. Economically, too, unbreakable ties have been built. While it may well be that the future importance of our relations will grow, it is unconceivable that it might shrink. We Japanese citizens are deeply concerned about the current situation and declare the following.

2. The current issues have been called conflicts about *territory*, but we must not forget that both have a historical background (the history of Japan’s invasions in Asia in the modern age). The background of President Yi’s visit on Takeshima 竹島 (Dokdo 獨島) is the problem of the *comfort women*. Its cause is that prime minister Noda³² did not directly answer despite the fact that, based on a judgment made by the Constitutional High Court of Korea last summer, President Yi addressed the *comfort women* issue at the summit in Kyoto at the end of last year. In his Independence Day speech on August 15, after his visit to Takeshima (Dokdo), President Yi again demanded from Japan “responsible measures” towards the *comfort women* issue.

The Japanese possession of Takeshima (Dokdo) began in February 1905, in the midst of the Russo-Japanese war, while the colonization of Korea (at that time the Greater Han Empire 大韓帝國) was under way and it had already been stolen its diplomatic powers. For the Korean people, these are not only “islands,” but the root and symbols of invasion and colonial rule. The Japanese must understand this.

30 B. 1942, premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China from 2003 to 2013.

31 Also written Lee Myung-bak, b. 1941, president of the Republic of Korea from 2008 to 2013.

32 Noda Yoshihiko 野田 佳彦, b. 1957, Japanese prime minister from 2011 to 2012.

Again, the Senkaku Islands 尖閣諸島 (“Diaoyudao” 钓鱼島 for the People’s Republic of China, “Diaoyutai” 釣魚台 for Taiwan) were integrated into Japanese territory in January 1895, when the outcome of the Sino-Japanese war had become evident. In March, Taiwan and the Pescadores became Japanese colonies according to the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Both occupations occurred when Korea and China (Qing 清 at that time) were extremely weak and unable to make diplomatic claims.

3. As for the Sino-Japanese relationship, this year (2012) marks the 40th anniversary of the restitution of diplomatic relations.³³ Many friendship events have been planned and prepared. The reason why friendship turned into conflict are Governor Ishihara’s³⁴ declaration to buy the Senkaku Islands and, with this as an opportunity, the intent of the Japanese government to nationalize them. It is no wonder that, seen from China, this came out as a “provocation” against the tacit “compromise” since the restitution of diplomatic relations to “shelve” the territorial issue. It must be said that criticism within Japan against the actions of the governor of Tokyo was weak. (Furthermore, the Noda government announced its plan for nationalization on July 7. This is the day of the incident at the Marco Polo Bridge 盧溝橋 (in 1937) when the Japanese intensified their invasion of China; it is called *Incident of July 7* in China, and we should bear in mind that it is a day which the (Chinese) people can never forget).

4. Territorial issues stir nationalism in every country. This is the reason why men in power use them as an outlet for domestic antagonisms. Actions on one side trigger off actions on the other side, which lead to an escalation; and there is no denying that, ultimately, they can develop into a situation where violent clashes cannot be controlled. We object to any use of violence, and we demand conflict resolutions based on peaceful talks. Each country’s government and media bear responsibility for restraining nationalism in their country and for dealing with the matter calmly. While we are risking to fall into a vicious circle, the role of the media in stopping this, reflecting on the past and promoting calmness is all the more important.

33 Diplomatic relations between Japan and the People’s Republic of China were restituted with the proclamation of the Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on September 29, 1972, providing, among others, that “Japan and China shall in their mutual relations settle all disputes by peaceful means and shall refrain from the use or threat of force.”

34 Ishihara Shintarō 石原慎太郎, b. 1932, governor of Tokyo from 1999 to 2012.

5. As concerns *territory*, having *consultations* and *dialogue* is the only way. Therefore, Japan must change its fictitious perception that “there is no territorial conflict (about the Senkaku islands)”. Everyone can see that “territorial conflicts” and “territorial disputes” are existing. Unless we admit their existence, we cannot even enter into consultations and negotiations. Moreover, the concept of “exclusive territory” is, for all sides, an essentially impossible concept.

6. It is at least necessary to keep up the Status Quo during consultations and negotiations and refrain from provocative actions against each other. It is necessary to set up basic rules and standards of action concerning these issues. On August 5, Taiwan’s president Ma Yingjeou 馬英九³⁵ announced an “East China Sea Peace Initiative.”³⁶ This is an extremely calm and sound proposal, demanding to calm down, not to escalate the conflict, to refrain from fighting, not to close the channels of communication, to search for consensus, and to define basic rules for actions in the East China Sea. Such voices should be extended and strengthened.

7. In the past, the Senkaku islands and the surrounding waters used to be a place of consumption and a sea of productivity where fishermen from Taiwan, Okinawa etc. caught fish and communicated. The fishermen from Taiwan and Okinawa do not wish the Senkaku Islands to become a focus of fighting between their countries. We must respect the voices of these private people.

8. It is most important for Japan to understand its own historical issues (the invasion of its neighbors in the modern age), to feel remorse, and to state them honestly. It must respect the agreements with its neighboring countries, such as the Joint Sino-Japanese Declaration (1972), the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1978), or the Japanese-Korean Declaration of Partnership (1998) and the Japanese-North Korean Pyongyang Declaration (2002). Moreover, it must reconfirm what it has declared concerning its understanding of the past, such as the Comment of Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno (1993),³⁷ the Comment of Prime Minister Murayama (1995)³⁸ and the

35 B. 1950, president of the Republic of China (Taiwan) since 2008.

36 Cf. www.mofa.gov.tw/EnOfficial/Topics/TopicsIndex/?opno=cc7f748f-f55f-4eeb-91b4-cf4a28bbb86f. Ma’s proposal calls for “promoting joint exploration and development” of the disputed islands.

37 On August 4, 1993, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei 河野 洋平, b. 1937, on behalf of the Japanese government stated that “the then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women,” and offered “sincere apologies and remorse.”

38 On August 15, 1995, Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi 村山 富市, b. 1924, based on a Cabinet Decision, offered an apology for the “tremendous damage and suffering to the

Comments of Prime Minister Kan (2010)³⁹. It must take the position of further deepening its resolution for peace, friendship, and cooperation with its neighbors. Again, it is necessary to accept once more the results of joint historical research undertaken between the Japanese and Korean governments, the Japanese and Chinese governments, or by private citizens and, in the case of the Japanese-Korean relations, the Joint Declaration of Japanese and Korean Intellectuals which stated the invalidity of the Korean Annexation Treaty of 1910.⁴⁰

9. The natural resources in the vicinity of the disputed territories must be jointly explored and jointly used. Sovereignty is indivisible, but natural resources, including fishery, can be jointly explored, managed and distributed. Instead of fighting over sovereignty, there must be consultations about the sharing of resources and their joint use. We must turn the seed of conflict leading to territorial nationalism into the nucleus of regional cooperation.

10. The reinforcement of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty under the pretext of these conflicts among neighboring countries and the additional increase of the burden of Okinawa, such as the deployment of the new Osprey vertical takeoff and landing aircraft,⁴¹ must not take place.

11. Finally, we propose to build a framework for future-oriented dialogue about the question of territories not only between the governments, but also at the level of the citizens of Japan, China, South Korea, Okinawa and Taiwan that puts weight on good faith and loyalty towards each other.

people of many countries” that Japan, “through its colonial rule and aggression,” had caused (www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html).

- 39 On August 10, 2010, Prime Minister Kan Naoto 菅直人, b. 1946, expressed his “feelings of deep remorse” and his apology towards “the tremendous damage and sufferings” that the Japanese colonial regime in Korea had caused (www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/kan/statement/201008/10danwa_e.html).
- 40 On May 5, 2010, Japanese and Korean intellectuals – among them leading historians and Nobel prize laureate Ōe Kenzaburō – published a joint declaration which called the Japanese colonial rule in Korea “unlawful and unjust” and the 1910 treaty of annexation “unlawful and unfair” (www.iwanami.co.jp/sekai/2010/07/105.html). By July 31, more than 1,100 people from both countries signed the declaration.
- 41 The Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey is a *V*TOL and *S*TOL aircraft developed for the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force. During testing, it was involved in a series of grave accidents, raising concerns about its operational safety. Against outspoken resistance from inhabitants and politicians of Okinawa, the U.S. Marine Corps began deploying it on Okinawa in July, 2012.

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